DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 244 953 SP 024 464

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TITLE Education: From Performing Art to Profession.
PUB DATE 28 Jan 84
NOTE 24p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Change Strategies; *Educational Change; *Foundations of Education; General Education; Higher Education; *Inquiry; Research Needs; Schools of Education; Teacher Certification; *Teacher Education; Teacher Education Programs; Teacher Salaries

ABSTRACT

Three basic assumptions which underlie the public attitude toward the teaching profession should be challenged. The first of these is that people should teach because they love it; the rewards of teaching are intrinsic. The second is that teaching is primarily the transmission of content. The third is that teacher preparation should consist of completing a baccalaureate program, undergoing a brief internship, and, thereafter, relying on wisdom accumulated from personal experience. Three new assumptions that can replace the old ones represent a major change in emphasis. First, teaching itself needs to become an inquiry process. Second, teaching ought to ground itself on what is known about teaching and learning. Third, the kind of knowledge required by teachers arises from the foundation of a sound liberal education as well as from research traditions common to the behavioral and social sciences, the arts, and the humanities. A discussion on the implications of these changed basic assumptions for the teaching profession focuses upon: (1) higher starting salaries for teachers; (2) changes in the structure of teacher education; (3) the need to redesign the structure of the schools; (4) the redesign of professional preparation; (5) the need to attend to the nature of inquiry in support of education; and (6) the need to increase resources available for educational research and development. (JD)

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ED244953

January 28, 1984

EDUCATION: FROM PERFORMING ART TO PROFESSION

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

"From famine to feast!" What a difference a year makes. Can you remember back twelve months before the revolution, before, that is, the public consciousness about American education shifted from latent gear to manifest?

Barely a year ago, you will remember, we educators were debating within our own circles what to do about the drastic de-prioritization visited upon our sector by the Reagan administration. While it is true there were those among us who were privy to the working group, commission, and individual efforts under way and knew, therefore, that something would begin to happen in the Spring of 1983, none of us in our wildest dreams would have predicted the Niagara of prescriptions, policy initiatives, and just plain paper that have poured forth since April 26 when the report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education was released.

But happen it did! Suddenly, the Nation was deluged with reports about education. Merely to list the ones already in hand or forthcoming in the months ahead would take more time than I can afford to spend in my presentation this morning. Among the more prominent, however, are John Goodlad's A Place Called School, Carnegie's High School by Ernest Boyer, The Excellence Commission report, A Nation at Risk, Action for Excellence from the Education Commission of the States, Mortimer Adler's Paideia, the report from the National Science Board, Educating Americans for the 21st Century, the so-called "green book" report from the College Board, Academic Preparation for College, in many ways the most pertinent for this audience, Congressman Paul Simon's "Merit Pay Task Force Report," the Council of Chief State School Officers' "Staffing the Nation's Schools: A National Emergency," and I can add now it to the list my own In Search of More Effective Service. And these do not exhaust the list. There will be more to come before the current round of self-examination is completed.

The impetus for the reports is familiar to us all now. The public is deeply concerned over the standards being defined, served, and achieved by the Nation's schools. The public is upset over perceptions that the quality of teachers has declined and that there are too many teachers whose basic competence is in doubt. Teacher education is singled out by many as a particular villain; to these folks "pedagogy" has an aroma as palatable as the shell pile from last Tuesday's crab feast! Parents object to the unresponsiveness of teachers and administrators to their needs and aspirations. The perceived failure of schools to maintain discipline worries many. President Reagan, for example, according to the December 21, 1983, issue of Education Week, seems ready to embark on a politically motivated, blame-the-victim campaign of what might be called a para-military strategy of

educational reform in America aimed at the narrow (though admittedly troublesome) problem of discipline problems in some of America's schools. We might even wonder whether the approach now being vigorously pursued is yet another tactic in Reagan's attempt to dismantle the Department of Education, by turning the task of educational reform over to the Justice Department! The President is not the only one who seems bent on scapegoating and meanspiritedness. Consider, for example, the negativism finding expression in the following editorial cartoons. Aside from these expressions, other concerns worry, too. The threat to the American economy, especially in the international marketplace, has the corporate sector and the defense establishment deeply concerned.

Recommendations have splashed out all over the place. The reports and those seeking to respond to them have proposed merit pay for teachers, a longer school day and school year, earlier schooling, more curricular "meat," a core curriculum, moving to a master teacher concept, extended contract years for teachers, volunteer service requirements for all secondary school students, more emphasis on academic content in teacher preparation, more effective principal leadership, fellowship incentives for recruiting more able people to teaching, prizes for high quality teaching, "schools within schools," differentiated staffing and career ladders, greater flexibility in teacher and administrator certification, creating to list just a few of the recommendations. There is no shortage of ideas about what might be done. There is no doubt that something must be done. There seems to be considerable rhetorical energy, at least, to invest in the construction of solutions. In a number of States that rhetorical energy has been and is being translated into legislation.

Any effective, long-range solutions, however, are going to have to deal with

more than perceptions. Solutions that are merely grafted on to the existing structure and circumstance will not work. Proposals for reform must recognize that the current situation has antecedents and reasons deeply embedded in our attitudes toward schools, their purposes, and the preparation and rewards of those who staff them.

What is the reality? If we audited the situation, what would we learn? Americans, in fact, are not of one mind on educational goals. When John Goodlad says we want it all, he puts his finger on a crucial contextual variable we ignore at our peril. Teaching is a low status occupation with low income incentives. In part in response to this condition, the organized profession in both teaching and administration, have responded with defensive tactics. The "benefits" that education received because other occupations were not open to women are no longer available. Despite the educational level required for certification, teaching is not a profession (much though many of us in it would wish otherwise). There are no career paths for advancement <u>in teaching</u>; to go up one has to go <u>out</u>! Education is a fragmented societal function which is, nevertheless, highly regulated at the local, State, and national levels by legislatures, administrative units, and the courts.

What is happening right now is especially instructive. What kind of an enterprise is it that gets so pent up that in the brief span of 30 months more than two dozen major reports on what's wrong and what to do about it flood its policy arena? The answer we should look for is not the obvious one: because so much is wrong. It is a non-obvious one: the flood occurs because the system itself is non-reflective, non-self-correcting, and apparently susceptible only to sporadic

attempts from outside to "set things straight."

Given these realities, how can advances be achieved?

When confronted with a situation as complex and apparently intractable as the problems now facing American education, we must examine the basic assumptions on which we have rested the whole. By doing so we can gain perspective on the problem's overall complexity. Furthermore, it may afford us a sense of distance which may help us project alternative visions that may prove instrumental as guides to present and future action. What are those assumptions?

I believe that in the eye of the public the present instructional system now rests on essentially three basic assumptions. The first is that people should teach because they love it; intrinsic rewards govern, not extrinsic. The second assumption is that teaching is primarily the transmission of content. The third is that the way to prepare for a teacher's role is to complete a baccalaureate program, undergo a very modest internship, and, thereafter, rely on the wisdom one can accumulate from one's own personal experience.

In identifying these three basic assumptions I am not claiming either that there is no evidence of competing views or that the Nation's educational systems have consciously opted to rest salaries, schools, or teacher preparation on them. All I am saying is that if one works backward from the salaries paid, the preparation models supported, or the language of the policy proposals advanced, those, in fact, have been and are the operating assumptions. Their net effect has been to define teaching as a performing art. One either has it or one doesn't. If you like it and

are willing, we'll admit you to the role. Preparation doesn't really make all that much difference. If you know something, you can teach it.

Those assumptions need to change. In their place need to go three new ones. The three new ones do not necessarily obliterate the old ones (excepting, perhaps, the seriously mistaken notion that teaching is merely the transmission of content), but they would represent a major change in emphasis.

First, teaching itself needs to become an inquiry process. What are we trying to achieve? With whom? Where are these students relative to the goals? What options exist in our repertoire? Of that range of options, what do we choose to employ and why? To what degree did our performance of the chosen option match our intent? What effect did our performance have on our students? What should we do now? What do we do when we don't know what to do?

Second, teaching ought to ground itself on what is known about teaching and learning. Of course content is crucial; in fact, without deep conceptual command of the subject matter, the foundation for the crucial curricular and instructional design responsibilities of teachers does not exist nor can the performance of children as they seek to acquire conceptual understanding be grasped sufficiently to guide instructional practice at any given point in time. Beyond sophisticated command of content/conceptual-process, however, unless we teach according to what is known about human learning, curriculum and instructional design, valid and reliable evaluation techniques, how learning settings function as social systems, constructive management of student behavior, and so on, we are essentially operating as amateurs, no matter how well-intended.

Third, the kind of knowledge required by teachers arises from the foundation of a sound liberal education as well as from the research traditions common to the behavioral and social sciences, the arts, and the humanities. It is both conceptual and practical. Furthermore, no one practitioner can possess it all. What this all will mean if we act on these new assumptions is that teaching will finally become a profession.

What happens if we apply such assumptions to schooling in America?

The very nature of assumptions in human discourse is that their effects may be traced in countless ways. The concept "countless," however, is incompatible with the number '60' corresponding to the minutes allotted for this session. Let me focus, then, on six major implications of changed basic assumptions for the education profession.

The first of these implications is higher starting salaries.

America gets what it pays for. If it is unhappy with the quality of its teachers, then it has to come to grips with the salary practices we have long followed for teachers, especially at the beginning levels and in an amount equivalent to at least 40 percent!

In making this statement, however, I am not arguing for the view that inadequate starting salary alone is responsible for the worsening academic levels of students attracted to teaching as a career. I believe that perceptions of the

conditions of practice in many schools across the country is an, at least, equally persuasive factor. Neither am I arguing that salary level is necessarily the prime motivator in career choice. But, just as clearly, it is a factor of no mean significance, especially as a negative in comparison to other fields recruiting students with baccalaureate degrees in hand.

Recruitment of more capable students, desirable in itself, becomes mandatory when one confronts the knowledge base existing for teachers and teaching, a knowledge base whose sophistication will itself become an essential element in the selective retention of teaching candidates. I have made these arguments elsewhere and won't repeat them here. Suffice to say that the liberal education, subject matter, and professional knowledge now clearly understood to underpin the teaching act is substantial and it requires a level of mind, judgment, and training that demand more capable individuals intellectually than we now, on the average, recruit and retain in teaching. Higher entry-level salaries are, therefore, a crucial derivative of the proposed change in basic assumptions.

A second implication focuses on changes in the structure of teacher education.

I have been persuaded that the implications of insisting that the profession be grounded on what is known about the requirements for and the practice of teaching dictate that we must stop preparing candidates for teaching at the baccalaureate level. Assuring that students receive a comprehensive and well-conceived liberal education and have mastered conceptually the subject matter they propose to teach is more than enough of a task for the baccalaureate program.

I was obviously referring to the students' task when I made that last statement. It is also a major task for those of us bearing responsibility for participation in the preparation of teachers.

Despite the extent to which, unaccountably, higher education seems to have been ignored by the several commission reports, it is an easily establishable fact that good conceptualizations of liberal education and clearly defined curricular and instructional programs aimed at achieving liberal education ends are virtually non-existent in American higher education. Seeking to accomplish professional preparation at the postbaccalaureate level, therefore, still leaves major reform tasks for America's colleges and universities at the baccalaureate level.

Similar deficiencies exist in the conceptualizations applied to the academic major, especially for those intending to enter teaching. Few academic departments spend sufficient time or energy to conceptualize the major other than in terms of its content divisions. But teachers require considerably more than this. They must understand the most fundamental structure of the content and skills they will be charged with helping children learn. Without that kind of deep understanding of the discipline, it is extremely difficult for teachers to learn, through the continuous inquiry directed to the feedback emiotted by students, what it is students are actually doing with the material, what kinds of mis- or non-understandings they are, in fact, struggling with which impede, or have to be corrected, on the way to success and mastery.

Creating sufficient curricular and instructional "space" to accomplish the

objectives required to ground the profession on the knowledge base is but one aim of the restructuring. A second will resolve a continuing difficulty in selective retention by admitting to teacher preparation only those with sufficient academic strength to perform the complex technical, intellectual, and judgmental responsibilities of teaching. Professional preparation programs will be able to define admissions standards in terms of baccalaureate achievement tests and/or approved program approaches, the latter allowing opportunities for receiving programs to review the liberal education and subject matter quality of preparing institutions and, where appropriate, guaranteeing students completing their work at such institutions automatic entry in the teacher preparation sequence.

The third major implication of the change in basic assumptions is the need to redesign the very structure of schools. We need to move from the egg crate schools of the present to the differentiated staffs of the future.

Three kinds of comments can be made about the necessary redesign. The first of these is the need to create the career ladders and differentiated staffing arrangements which will provide career paths within teaching for present and future teachers. The redesigned school, if you will, is the structure against which the ladder will rest. If teachers' roles are redefined and differentiated from one another, then the kind of schools we have now will have to give way before new ones.

The second comment pertains to the difficulty of overcoming inertia. We are very deeply rooted in tradition in this area; it will be difficult for us to break free of the cloying images of the past and present. This is an area where it will be

important for our voices to be heard, especially as experimentation begins in defining roles for master teachers and career ladders along which more creative and insightful teachers can advance. We are likely to be discouraged by two real influences, the power of the comfort of present role occupants in the present structures and the claims of those who will tell us that differentiated staffing models were tried in the sixties and found wanting.

That last is an important point to consider. It puts me in mind of Arthur Jensen's 1968 claim that compensatory education had failed when, in fact, it had not yet been tried. The differentiated staffing arrangements of the sixties, while exciting then in their prospects, in retrospect were insufficiently comprehensive, insufficiently supported by curricular innovations and relatively powerless to overcome the contextual forces that would force them to "regress to the mean."

To create schools which organizationally and functionally rest on professional knowledge is a critical design task in its own right. Major support will be required to achieve the aim. Healthy competition should be sought in developing alternative conceptualizations, and those conceptualizations will have to be subjected to intensive scrutiny by persons representing the widest variety of current roles.

The third comment is difficult to present at this point in the exposition because its rationale rests on material still forthcoming. But let me stab at it anyway. One of the reasons why education has had such difficulty achieving professional status is because of the paucity of effective, supportive interaction of teachers and their immediate superiors with one another. This is caused by the "flat" structure of schools and the effective isolation of practitioners from one

another in the daily conduct of their responsibilities. That "flatness" has been the single most serious impediment to the gradual development and diffusion of the wisdom of practice. Teachers cannot effectively help one another through the application of that wisdom because they do not see one another in their teaching roles. No single characteristic as a profession differentiates teaching more from the major professions whose actual interactions (or mechanisms which stand for that, e.g. in the blueprints and computer programs of engineering design, contracts, briefs, and court cases of the law, or the ubiquitous records of physicians and nurses) daily operate to support and enhance professional standards and the improvement of practice.

Parity with other professions in regard to professional collaboration is only one dimension, however. For education, whose supportive knowledge comes from the behavioral and social science disciplines and the quite different but equally valid practical knowledge of teachers themselves, undertaking the kind of practice-oriented inquiry called for in daily professional practice must be done from multiple perspectives. I will say more about that in a minute. The point here is that multiple perspectives are far more likely to be applied if those perspectives are represented by different people, and schools characterized by differentiated staffs working collaboratively with one another is how such diversity can more nearly be guaranteed.

The fourth implication is the redesign of professional preparation.

I will speak briefly here, too, but do not mistake the brevity as a statement of its relative importance or the ease with which its implications will be achieved.

The suggested changes in basic assumptions underlying teaching demand the most fundamental reconceptualization of the design of professional preparation programs. That reconceptualization must be translated into the very structure of the certification process, extending to the delineations we accept among the teacher certifications as well as the internal definition given to each.

The conceptualization of the preparation program must itself be grounded on what we know about several backgrounds teachers need to have. They must understand the culture(s) within which their teaching takes place and which constitutes the framework lending authority to the established curricular and instructional goals. They must be deeply versed on how subject matter must be understood and also on what kinds of intellectual functions teachers must perform to carry out their duties. They must know what pedagogical research and scholarship about education have to say about instructional practice and its organizational context. Such a conceptualization of teacher education calls for a consciousness of the scholarly underpinnings of the entire curriculum that few programs have yet been able to display. The requisite conceptualizations cannot be developed by individual faculty; they must be created by teams fully reflecting the intellectual and scholarly underpinnings of the profession. That has profound implications, not only for the minimal range of faculty expertise required among the professional faculty, but also for the direct engagement of persons broadly representative of the underpinning academic disciplines. This virtually has to mean, ultimately, a reduction of fifty percent or more in the number of institutions able, on intellectual and academic grounds, to deliver the substantive expertise required for professional preparation.

A second implication of teacher education redesign is in some ways even more profound. While we have talked increasingly in recent decades about the importance of adequately supported clinical and field experience and also of the importance of modeling best practice in our own instruction we have not yet made the next crucial leap, namely, that the entire professional program must itself be a clinical experience, must itself display clinical fidelity with its own objectives. That is true not only because it is logically correct but because it speaks to a huge difficulty with which we in teacher education have had difficulty coping. I speak of the challenge of overcoming the sixteen years of socialization to teaching represented by our students' twelve years in school before they come to us and the highly traditional models of applied pedagogy (not to dignify it too much, I hope) they experience at the hands of their collegiate instructors including us! If we ever hope to help them acquire better models of instruction then we must totally immerse our students in them. The implications are weighty, to say the least. Past prescriptions about "modeling" have essentially been directed to us as individual instructors. The implication of clinical fidelity in our own programs means that the autonomy we have enjoyed in our own instruction must give way in the face of a program's obligation; in their entirety, our students' professional preparation programs must epitomize the kind of practice we seek to demand of them when they leave us. Teacher preparation programs, in short, must demand of themselves clinical fidelity at the program level!

Another key characteristic of the redesign should reflect the emergent inquiry orientation of teaching itself. Prospective teachers need to learn how to conduct practice-based inquiry. They need to understand deeply that inquiry done

by themselves and others will form, over time, the basis for changes in their own practice. Expectations for changes in the future should leave them with the clear understanding that continuing professional development, informal in their differentiated school staff settings and formal by periodic returns to the university in both pedagogy and subject matter, will be required of them.

The same understandings will have to be reflected in certification. For one thing, we should expect very substantial reduction, if not in the number of certificates (which will still key to subject matter areas and different kinds of learners), then certainly in the common cores of liberal education and pedagogical underpinnings. The permanent certificate should be replaced (without a grandparenting clause) by a requirement that at least every five years something like the equivalent of fifteen hours of graduate level continuing professional development work be undertaken. In addition, we and the organized profession (which, incidentally, we should work very hard to help unify so that there is one organization there, not two) should actively seek to bring about national licensure in teaching; the variations in levels of expectation for teacher preparation across the States is far beyond that which can be considered healthy for the Nation as a whole.

Redesigns of the kind envisioned here will not be possible without resources. Professional preparation on the cheap will not sustain the design and development tasks which need to be completed. In our own institutions, in our respective States, and at the national level we must work to persuade policy leadership of the need for these resources and then assure the necessary allocations and appropriations.

The fifth implication is the need to attend to the very nature of inquiry in support of education.

A proposal for professional reform resting on knowledge and inquiry needs carefully to consider the implications of the character of inquiry capable of supporting the enterprise. Let me suggest some outlines.

To rest the educational system on knowledge and inquiry requires clarity respecting the nature of inquiry processes and products for education.

Examples of educational inquiry range from the research conducted to improve fundamental theory, to the design and development of effective curricular materials, to the kinds of practical inquiry represented by attempts to secure information helpful in understanding the nature of a learning difficulty in a specific child.

The purposes of educational inquiry range from the development of theory to the formulation of policy. Inquiry is conducted in instructional settings by teachers aimed at supporting the countless decisions and instructional design puzzles they face daily. Practical inquiry is also undertaken in support of the instructional act (for example, that pertaining to the design and development of professional training programs). Educational development, the equivalent of the engineering function whereby sound theory is translated into materials, techniques and organizational design structures for schooling, is also important yet at present hardly supported.

Educational inquiry constitutes a substantial subset of the larger domain of which it is a part. A proposal to ground the profession on the processes and

products of inquiry needs to be understood, therefore, in the context of the special characteristics of behavioral and social inquiry. Those characeristics may be said to illuminate our understanding of the complexity and difficulty of inquiry in support of education. Like spotlights, understanding those characteristics helps us see how knowing can help. These characteristics include:

1. The almost limitless number of variables and the great difficulty in controlling them for purposes of study or practical effect.

2. The great complexity of the relationships among the variables including the extent to which the effects of variables acting on one another may be simultaneous.

3. The metaphorical character of the terminology employed in educational inquiry. Meaning is often indirect or oblique and is inevitably invested with affective content.

4. The inescapability of value considerations. The concepts, methods, and modes of presentation of inquiry are inextricably bound up in values of many different kinds.

5. The influence of human consciousness. Mere attention to a topic subtly changes it, especially over time.

The effects of these five characteristics combine to yield three important second-order characteristics:

1. Behavioral and social inquiry will not have the cumulative character of research in the natural or bio-medical sciences. It can, however, illuminate the current scene and generate data on which responsible action may be taken.

2. Because of the many variables and their complex interaction, the search for generalization, except as it is oriented to theoretical understanding, may well be over-emphasized. The need for inquiry strategies appropriate to specific sites and circumstances emerges as especially crucial.

3. Different kinds of people engaged in education know things in different, but not necessarily intellectually superior, ways. Academics' understandings or knowledge is of one kind, practitioners' of a second, and clients' and stakeholders' of still a third. Understanding the equal legitimacy but fundamental differ-

ences of these several ways of knowing is especially important for a proposed grounding of the profession of education on the processes and products of inquiry.

One of the major contributions of inquiry to educational practice is the recognition of the usefulness and the ubiquitousness of multiple perspectives of social reality. These kinds of understandings must be reflected in the academic preparation of prospective teachers, in their professional preparation programs, in the roles and functions of teachers, and in the very institutional structures from which those roles are performed. We have a way to go before we are there.

The last implication of grounding the profession on knowledge and inquiry is the need dramatically, but gradually, to increase the resources available for support of inquiry and scholarship pertaining to learning, teaching, and education.

I believe that increase can and will come. It, too, must rest on the kinds of understandings about the character of inquiry in support of education. It, too, must address the implications of those characteristics for the support of research and development for a decentralized educational system such as we have in America.

No other major societal enterprise in America is as ill-supported for inquiry as education. Medicine, for example, enjoys 72 times the level of Federal support as education. Does that mean education is 72 times less important? Of course not! It does indicate beliefs and priorities, however, and these must be changed. One of the ways I have suggested doing this is by making some assumptions about

the level of support required and why, and then developing conjectures about what might be done to get us there.

In recent years we have witnessed the erosion of Federal support for educational research. We have gotten into a box arguing over the allocation of dribs and drabs of money. Instead, we should consider what a billion dollar budget for educational R&D should be, why, and to what, therefore, it should be allocated. For example, the technology of curriculum development is available to us. Probably no better means exists of incorporating what we know about human learning into instructional practice, especially if we see to it that the materials thus developed accompany the refinement of our understanding of how effective teachers actually think and what kinds of inquiry they need to engage in so they can design curricular and instructional strategies suited to the immediate circumstances confronting them. Three hundred million a year would guarantee support for 300 curriculum projects a year, starting fifty a year on a six year cycle thus guaranteeing the regular revisions of all the major curricular areas through the second year of college.

Regional laboratories covering the country and supported at ten to twenty million a year to aid states and local districts in the translation of research into practice and to do development projects keyed to regional needs and aspirations would take another $300,000,000. Supporting R&D Centers at universities and other research institutions wherever there were sufficient aggregations of research talent to justify such a programmatic activity would take another $50,000,000. An ongoing program of project research might be funded annually at $150,000,000, dissemination resources at $50 million, and policy research and basic statistics activities at

another $75 million. If one then imagines a recurring program of summer and academic year institutes for re-training and refurbishing teachers and other practitioners at $150 million plus, the dimensions of what might be accomplished begin to emerge.

Conclusion

These implications range widely. They portend major changes in function, organization, and role for all participants in the larger profession of education. The vision embraced by them cannot be achieved by any one group of stakeholders in the profession acting alone; considerable coordination will ultimately be required. Paradoxically, that does not mean that the transformation is a fragile one, susceptible to any challenge that might come along. On the contrary, the very nature of the proposal means that it is capable of being initiated and sustained virtually anywhere in the larger system. Furthermore, once begun, it is difficult to see, in the long run, how it can be resisted. As individuals and the pieces and parts of the system they constitute increasingly act according to the processes and products of inquiry, they will tend to oblige neighboring and interlinking parts to function in like fashion.

To start the process it is only necessary to demand of ourselves the same rigor others are demanding of us. As each proposal for change -- or stasis --comes before us, we need to ask what we know that is relevant and how we know it. We need to be willing to hold that knowledge and way of knowing up to public scrutiny according to the time-honored traditions of inquiry. We need to be clear in our own minds about the basis for rejecting claims to knowledge and what

the implications of such rejection are for our own profession, for the claims of effective service we would make, and for the lives of those who come to us to be served.

What I have described here this morning is my version of what Gary Sykes calls the professional project of education. It will not be achieved overnight; it will take between two and four decades to accomplish. If we began now the twenty-year cycle of disconcertedness about American education might finally be broken. We might just get to the point where those of us retiring in 2003 can look at a profession in emerging flower. The timeframe is the only one that makes sense; anything less will be too short a perspective to guide us. Anything longer will be too difficult to comprehend as a guide to action. Teacher educators together with representatives of the organized profession and the leadership of the research community need to embark on that exploration today.

Despite the radically decentralized potential of the concept of professional evolution sketched out here this morning, to be successful it will ultimately require the coordinate efforts of vast numbers of different kinds of officials and professionals. We do not have a National Ministry of Education nor would we want one. No czar is available to decree a cohesive set of steps to be taken. No conductor exists to wave a baton commanding the simultaneous attention of flautists, tympani, first violin, and horn. If the kind of fundamental change required is to be undertaken and achieved it will take independent action by many according to a common theme or which broad agreement exists. I have sought to sketch this theme out ever so briefly. As simply put as possible, it is a theme which defines professional educators as persons who in the context of formal schooling know:

how to do something,

why they are doing it,

that they are doing it when they are,

whether they should be doing it,

when to stop doing it,

when they don't know what they're doing, and, finally,

reasonable strategies to determine what to do anyway!

The theme guiding the route to reform suggested here is that the essential query for professional educators is "Do we know what we're doing and why?" When we ask it, we are engaging in inquiry. When we are challenged by others who ask it, we are being subjected to inquiry. When we act as a profession daily and moment by moment according to its requirements, then we will be grounded on inquiry. Then we will have transformed ourselves from a performing art into a profession!

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